

# **Task Force Report to Provost Karen Hanson on the Proposed Creation of a New College Consisting of CBS and CFANS**

## **Task Force Members**

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## **Task Force Report to Provost Karen Hanson on the Proposed Creation of a New College Consisting of CBS and CFANS.**

### **Executive Summary**

This report is submitted in response to Provost Karen Hanson's request for "*careful consideration of whether consolidating existing strengths will advance the excellence of our research and teaching; benefit students; enhance our partnerships with agriculture and other key stakeholders; and strengthen opportunities to help address critical challenges in agriculture, biology, environmental and natural resource sciences, and medicine.*" These questions are of importance for the University to consider the best strategy to address the "new biology" on a university-wide basis. The task force gathered a deep understanding of the context of these large questions, concerns, and opportunities at the 10,000-foot level. We consulted with faculty, staff, students, extension, external stakeholders, deans, and department heads to address the question of a merger in the broadest sense. In addition, we sought input from faculty and administrators from two other Universities.

After careful review of the survey responses, listening sessions, and other stakeholder input as well as discussion of subcommittee reports, the task force by unanimous consensus recommends against the formation of a new college consisting of a merger of CFANS and CBS. However, we believe there are important opportunities to more closely integrate resources of both colleges, to enhance teaching, improve diversity and inclusivity, to build long-term research collaborations, and to bring diverse ideas and challenges together for innovative science and problem-solving. This would build on and enhance existing strengths (and core values and commitments) in both colleges, while also leveraging other strengths and assets of the University. We provide some suggestions as to how this could be achieved.

The committee was in agreement that a merger focusing on just these two colleges fell far short of what it would take to realize the potential of the "new biology" at the University of Minnesota. An important reality is that over the next decade a large fraction of faculty from CFANS and CBS, as well as from other units of the university, will likely be retiring and that renewed investment of such faculty resources into academic areas that address the "new biology" would represent an institutional mechanism to address the 21<sup>st</sup> Century grand challenges.

Based on the overwhelmingly negative feedback received by the committee, and the committee's judgment, merging just these two colleges could result in undermining their respective missions. Moreover, the continued support of some, but not all, external constituencies aligned with these colleges could be weakened if this merger were to occur.

### *Rationale for our recommendation*

Across the University of Minnesota a few structural barriers have slowed innovation and student education limiting the ability to address critical challenges in the life sciences in the next 30 years. A CFANS/CBS merger is not the most effective or efficient structural response to these barriers because 1) few gains were identified over current conditions, 2) external pressures would not be more effectively addressed over current conditions, 3) each college's mission is sufficiently distinct that there is minimal overlap, and 4) dramatic cultural differences between the two colleges creates strength in diversity now, but could be a major barrier in a merged unit. Leadership, within colleges supported by central administration, can address the key structural barriers by encouraging collaboration across colleges through research cooperatives and cross-college instructional initiatives, among other suggestions. This will have an improved chance of success if it is given priority over status quo operations and new investment is centered on these collaborative efforts.

Below is the charge for the committee, approaches used to gather input, followed by the major findings of the six subcommittees, and suggested alternative approaches to address the Provost's charge. Each group wrote a separate report with all reports appended.

### **I. Charge**

On September 4, 2013, Provost Karen Hanson charged a task force with examining the potential creation of a new college for the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. The college would integrate faculty and staff from the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS) and the College of Biological Sciences (CBS).

The task force was composed of faculty and students from the two colleges and included: Michael Sadowsky (co-chair), Gary Muehlbauer (co-chair), Rylee Ahnen, John Berini, David Bernlohr, Gregory Cuomo, Salli Dymond, Emily Hoover, Rob Kulhanek, Mindy Kurzer, Scott Lanyon, Kristen Nelson, Seth Naeve, Philip Pardey, Carl Stenoien, Ambuj Upadhyay, Daniel Voytas, Susan Weller, and Michael White.

The charge to the task force was to consider, from varied perspectives and with no foregone conclusions, whether the merger of CFANS and CBS into a new college devoted to agriculture, life sciences, and the environment might consolidate the strengths of the University in ways that would advance our academic mission and our engagement with local and global communities. Specifically, the task force was asked to carefully consider, in consultation with internal and external stakeholders, whether consolidating existing strengths could advance the excellence of our research and teaching; benefit students; enhance our partnerships with agriculture and other key stakeholders; and strengthen opportunities to help address critical challenges in agriculture, biology, environmental and natural resource sciences, and medicine.

This consideration was timely because of leadership transitions in CBS and CFANS, but was driven principally by the growing importance of the life sciences and trends in research and higher education in agricultural, biological, and natural resource sciences. In charging the task force, the Provost emphasized the importance of maintaining existing strengths in CFANS and CBS specifying that any recommended outcome must enhance the fulfillment of the University's land grant mission, and its historic commitment to agricultural research and education. The Provost also wanted to make sure that the New College would ensure the ongoing excellence of research and education in the basic biological and natural resource sciences.

In the National Research Council's 2009 treatise "A New Biology for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" members of the National Academy of Science and other academic leaders identified 4 great societal challenges we will face in the future. These include:

- Production of abundant healthful food for everyone
- Management of an environment that is resilient and flourishing
- Development of sustainable, clean energy
- Establishment of global health as the norm for civilization

Each of these themes has a connection to both CBS and CFANS and discussions between Dean Robert Elde (CBS) and former Dean Allen Levine (CFANS) around the "new biology" were the impetus for consideration of a potential new college. These discussions centered around the need for biologists (CBS) to engage in applied work relevant to agriculture, medicine, natural resources, the environment and engineering. Moreover, faculty in applied units (CFANS) needed to embrace discovery-driven fundamental research to be ready to address societal change. Together, CFANS and CBS faculty interests reflect these trends. The two colleges have been notable for their intersecting interests and close faculty/staff collaborations, and both include applied and basic research faculty. The two colleges continue to have ongoing conversations concerning strengthening research and teaching interactions.

The two college deans proposed that a new college combining CBS and CFANS might create expanded opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaborations reflecting the maturing explosion of biological knowledge in the era of genomics. More specifically, it could allow faculty to conduct research and teaching in a more collaborative fashion, remove cross-collegiate obstacles for grant proposals and sharing of facilities, and optimize investments in teaching and research space. Moreover, by judiciously deploying the combined faculty towards the "new biology" the University would be poised to address many of the grand challenges set out by the National Research Council.

The provost asked that the task force fully examine these possibilities, to seek perspectives from stakeholders, and to weigh the benefits and synergies as well as potential concerns and challenges. The task force was asked to deliver an executive summary and report to the Provost by early spring semester to include advisory recommendations for her consideration.

## **II. Approaches to address the charge**

The task force took three primary approaches to address the charge including: (1) visits to other Universities by the Task Force Chairs; (2) web-based surveys and comments; and (3) listening sessions.

Mike Sadowsky and Gary Muehlbauer visited two universities that have undergone mergers of the life sciences and agriculture at the collegiate and departmental levels. They visited the University of Wisconsin at Madison, which in the early 1900s merged agriculture and life sciences into a college, the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, now headed by Dean Kathryn VandenBosch, a former head of plant biology in CBS. They also visited the University of California at Davis where the Department of Plant Sciences formed in 2004 from the merger of four individual plant-centered departments.

A web-based survey was developed by the task force, with help from Kate Tyler (Office of the Provost), to seek stakeholder perspectives on the potential advantages of a new college, as well as their potential concerns. The survey included several open-ended questions in six overarching areas of focus: research, extension, undergraduate and graduate education, external constituents/outreach, and college operations/staff. The survey link was sent to faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students, and to external stakeholders for both colleges (using lists supplied by the colleges). We received 724 responses to the survey. We also received several dozen comments through an online form we set up on the task force information page on the Provost's website as well as comments via email and letters.

Multiple listening sessions were conducted, at least one for each CBS/CFANS stakeholder group. Stakeholder groups included: 1. Tenure/tenure track faculty, 2. P&A, Civil service and CSBU staff, 3. Undergraduate students, 4. Graduate students, 5. Extension faculty and staff, and 6. External stakeholders, comprised primarily of members from the business community. The task force divided itself into six subcommittees (see composition of subcommittees below), one for each of the listening session groups. The subcommittees developed a set of questions to facilitate discussions at the listening sessions and to report on the results of the listening session and survey questions. We engaged an outside facilitator for the sessions to allow task force members to focus on listening to stakeholder input.

The task force also conducted interviews with Deans Robert Elde and Brian Buhr, the associate deans of both colleges, and the department heads in CFANS. The department heads within CBS were not interviewed as the taskforce included a majority of CBS department heads. The Associate Deans of research and undergraduate education from both colleges met with the task force to present their views. The entire task force was invited to each of these listening sessions. Sadowsky and Muehlbauer also had a separate meeting with former Dean Al Levine.

Each of the subcommittees of the task force produced a report (appended). The entire task force discussed each subcommittee report at two meetings. Their recommendations

and subsequent discussions form the basis of this report. In addition, we received letters from students and external stakeholders (appended).

***Subcommittee composition***

**Faculty:** Mindy Kurzer, Kristen Nelson, Ambuj Upadhyay, and Dan Voytas

**Staff:** Gary Muehlbauer, and Michael Sadowsky, (with support from K. Tyler)

**Undergraduate students:** Rylee Ahnen, Emily Hoover, Rob Kulhanek, and Michael White

**Graduate Students:** John Berini, Salli Dymond, Scott Lanyon, and Carl Stenoien

**External Stakeholder:** Seth Naeve, Susan Weller (with support from K. Tyler)

**Extension:** Dave Bernlohr, Greg Cuomo, and Philip Pardey

**III. Findings of task force**

There was an overwhelming lack of support for the merger of the two colleges by all of the groups contacted (faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, staff, stakeholders, extension, heads, and associate deans). This was in large part due to the significant differences in culture and mission. In addition, the merger of these two colleges is an incomplete response to the scientific promise and societal implications of a “new biology”. That is, the proposed college merger did not emerge as the consensus strategy to strengthen opportunities to help address critical challenges in agriculture, biology, and environmental and natural resources sciences.

The major findings of the six subcommittees are summarized below starting with concerns related to a merger, followed by opportunities afforded by a merger, and concluding with suggested alternatives for addressing current challenges in the life sciences. The task force felt that future discussions of mergers might be better received if a clear vision of the proposed benefits of a merger was disseminated before the wider discussion. The committee was in agreement that the potential combined college would fall far short of what it would take to realize the life sciences potential of UM.

***Concerns and/or limitations about proposed merger***

***Faculty***

The faculty subcommittee found that across the University of Minnesota only a few structural barriers have slowed innovation and student education so as to limit the ability to address critical challenges in the life sciences in the next 30 years. A CFANS/CBS merger was thought not to be the most effective or efficient structural response to these barriers because few gains were identified for research and teaching over current conditions. Indeed, because of the differences in the academic qualifications of the CBS vs. CFANS undergraduate students, over time a merger of colleges would have a potentially deleterious effect on the unique qualities of each educational enterprise due to a blending of the population. In addition, retaining separate courses/sections for

CBS/CFANS students would be not only cost-ineffective but also lead to separate cultures amongst the student body.

Moreover, since each college's mission is sufficiently distinct, there is minimal overlap. Dramatic cultural differences between the two colleges create strengths in diversity now, but could be weakened in a merged unit. It was suggested that leadership, within colleges and supported by central administration, can address the few structural barriers by encouraging collaboration across colleges through research cooperatives and cross-college instructional initiatives (see below). This could be successful if it is given priority over status quo operations and if new investments are centered on these collaborative efforts.

### *Staff*

The staff subcommittee identified many issues and concerns that were similarly voiced by the other listening groups. College Staff (both P&A and civil service staff) were concerned that demands on the staff during the development of a new college would be large, particularly if it occurred concurrently with other changes on the horizon such as the University's rollout of a new enterprise system. The staff cited the potential for increased workload, the possibility of some duplication in functions between the two colleges, and uncertainty about jobs as concerns that likely would contribute to lower morale and productivity. CFANS staff commented that they played a large role in the COAFES – CNR merger in 2006. They are finally feeling comfortable with their new roles. Thus, there was not much energy for developing a new college. Other comments addressed the possibility that a merged college would negatively affect alumni loyalty and fundraising.

### *Undergraduate students*

The undergraduate student subcommittee heard through surveys and listening sessions that undergraduate students in both colleges were very concerned about this merger. Students expressed the perceived loss of collegiate feel with both groups stating they like their "small college" atmosphere. CBS students felt they would lose or dilute the prestige and brand of their college. CFANS students felt the importance of interdisciplinary and problem-solving education would be lost in a sole focus on basic biology. Current students felt there would be reduced access to the new college by what would be future CFANS students because the freshman student profiles differ markedly between CFANS and CBS. If entrance requirements were changed, potentially fewer students would be admitted to what are now current CFANS undergraduate programs. CFANS students expressed their concern over the loss of "the land-grant university" mission that CFANS represents. Due to different student profiles, there might be a loss of scholarships in CFANS to CBS students. CFANS students also perceived the potential loss of visibility of majors in CFANS. All students suggested a loss of viability and vitality of the St. Paul campus and there were concerns that courses and faculty might move to Minneapolis



campus. And finally, the two student bodies expressed significant concern that because these student groups have very different academic and professional goals, they have very different student support service needs and that students in a new college would be less well-served than they are currently.

### *Graduate students*

The graduate student subcommittee found that most graduate students were primarily concerned that their programs stay strong and that their funding opportunities do not diminish. The college or department that their program is in was of minor importance when choosing a graduate program. Therefore, maintaining the status quo was generally seen as preferable to change which most felt would most likely weaken their program. Although most responses were negative about the merger itself, the consensus was that it was important to explore ways to capitalize on the strengths of the two colleges.

### *Extension*

The CFANS extension faculty focused their discussions largely on “what Biological Sciences could bring to Extension”. From their perspective, it appeared unclear what value Extension could bring to CBS, other than an additional education opportunity that may be of help with grants that require an external outreach or broader impacts section. Moreover, given the absence of CBS attendance at the listening sessions, we are not sure that CBS faculty view connection to Extension as a value. As presently conceived, Extension efforts are centered on creating behavior change, largely through non-credit education. They questioned: How will this be understood and embraced in a grant funded, for-credit environment? It was also felt that it was not clear if Extension is ready and/or capable of changing to meet the challenges that would occur with a proposed merger. Much of Extension’s funding has a local and regional (within state) component, with strong agricultural interests. The prospects of sustaining that funding support over time with a merger were put into question. It was also not clear to them that a merger would clearly enhance that local or regionally oriented food, agricultural, and natural resource outreach effort.

### *External Stakeholders*

External stakeholders expressed strong concern over a perceived lack of compelling arguments for a new college comprised of CBS and CFANS. They are cautiously willing to support a new college if a coherent argument is provided that convinces them that the new college will be considerably more effective than the current situation. They noted that CFANS was only seven years old as a merged college (created from COAFES and CNR) and some stakeholders believed it had yet to fully demonstrate the promised benefits. A few suggested that if the siloed structure of colleges presented challenges (vertical, hierarchical structure), then it would make sense to look at horizontal (cross-

college) integration as a first step rather than creating a new vertical structure. Specific concerns were raised about whether a consolidated college would end up weakening the University's commitment to agricultural production, agricultural education, and Extension, and the land-grant mission. There was appreciation for how CBS-CFANS collaborations could leverage bioscience and life sciences knowledge to benefit agriculture and agribusiness. Stakeholders questioned whether a new college that spans food, agricultural and natural resources on the one hand, and health sciences on the other, could sustain agricultural outreach. Concerns centered on the perceived funding landscape increasingly favoring basic biological sciences to the detriment of agriculture and natural resource disciplines. With the differing educational programs of the two colleges, it would be important to make sure any merger would not weaken access and programs in agricultural education, that are important to the state.

Stakeholders felt that the need for a second merger, so soon after the 2006 one, was not adequately demonstrated. External stakeholders concerns echoed those of prior subgroups. It was repeatedly mentioned that should a college merger go forward, compelling arguments would be needed to gain external stakeholder support. Stakeholders commented that they respected that the idea for the new college had come from Dean Elde and Dean Levine, but that building support for and testing arguments for a new college in advance of such a decision would be prudent. Importantly, it should be noted that stakeholders reiterated their general support for the University and their trust in its leadership.

### ***Opportunities and benefits of consolidating into one college***

Despite these concerns about a merger option, opportunities were mentioned in relation to combining both colleges. These are listed here.

#### ***Faculty***

Faculty indicated there could be opportunities arising from a merger, but whether or not they are realized depends on the leadership goals of a merged college. Some valued faculty from both colleges teaching across the complement of majors—if departmental boundaries are also reduced, the ability to use diverse funds from the previous colleges to support graduate students, and increased student numbers (graduate and undergraduate). Some suggested it would be possible to more easily decrease redundancy, integrate field stations and ROCs, enhance outreach for what is currently CBS research, and increase the size of a college focused on life sciences.

#### ***Staff***

Staff felt that the advantages of the creation of a new college for curriculum and instruction included: more efficient research and teaching collaboration for faculty and

students, ease of attracting prospective students, easier for students to move between units of the same college or reconsider their specialization, students equipped in the newest most integrated science, attract a wider pool of prospective employers/recruiters for our students, and provide greater access for students to a broader range of faculty.

For issues related to resources and structure, Staff felt that both colleges needed to move forward and accelerate progress, and that merging may bring a significant investment to the St. Paul campus. They also thought that merging may give the unit more influence in the University as a larger college and this may translate into increased resources. They also stressed that this may allow for the possible integration of outstate facilities (Itasca, Cloquet, etc.), and that a new college would result in a reduction of redundancies between colleges, increases in efficiencies, and better alignment of some disciplines and resources. Together, they felt that a merged larger unit may lead to enhanced opportunities for resources and this may help with collaboration with other units.

The staff highlighted several areas that could be improved including: developing stronger collaboration between the two colleges in teaching and research that leverages the strengths of each college, attracting stronger students, reduced redundancies and more efficient use of resources, integrating outstate facilities, and reinvigorating the St. Paul campus. Much of this could be accomplished without the formation of a new college. If a new college was to be formed, however, the staff needed to see the transparency of all processes and be involved early on for input and advice on how to achieve the needed changes and goals.

### *Undergraduate students*

The undergraduate students noted the following issues should be addressed even without a merger. CFANS students should be allowed to minor in or take some CBS courses they currently are blocked from taking and conversely, that CBS students have access to the CFANS career center which spans a diversity of careers, not just professional degrees in medicine and academics. Students recognized that there could be increased collaboration for research, teaching, and coursework across current colleges.

### *Graduate students*

Many students had strong opinions about current strengths that shouldn't be weakened and current weaknesses that should be addressed, but were unclear whether merger would make matters better or worse. In addition to the points raised above, the graduate students also felt the need for more professional development opportunities, a broader range of courses, and that the new college may increase the visibility and clout for the non-medical life sciences at the University of Minnesota. They also expressed the need of better graduate student support in the form of additional RA and TA opportunities.

### *Extension*

The extension faculty felt that there were ways to strengthen the role of extension in linking new scientific discoveries to long-standing and emerging challenges in the state. In lieu of merging colleges here are some suggestions: 1) more closely aligning (or even integrating) scientific endeavors of CBS and CFANS, 2) creating the opportunity to link the basic knowledge of CBS to the state of Minnesota, 3) the ability to enhance broader impacts required in many federal grant applications, and 4) more closely linking the basic science in CBS with Extension may improve granting success. Finally, a new college has the prospects of creating a stronger Extension/engagement link between food, agriculture and human health.

### *External stakeholders*

The stakeholders that responded to the survey and attended the listening session reiterated their general support for the University and their trust in its leadership.

### *Input based on visits to other universities*

A visit to the University of Wisconsin at Madison indicated that they greatly valued the mixing of agriculture and the life sciences in the combined colleges now called CALS. This allowed capturing students diverse interests and backgrounds into a single collegiate entity. Several pertinent comments were made such as: “Could not imagine a strong agriculture college without strong basic sciences, and society will demand a combined basic and applied approach to solve problems”. A visit to the University of California at Davis indicated that during a recent merger of the plant sciences departments the faculty were at first not interested but bought into the idea when it was incentivized with faculty positions and changes to majors.

## **IV. Alternative approaches to address the Provost’s charge**

After careful consideration of the survey responses, listening sessions, and other stakeholder input, and discussion of subcommittee reports, the task force by unanimous consensus recommends against the formation of a new college consisting of a merger of CFANS and CBS. However, we believe there are important opportunities to more closely integrate resources of both colleges, to enhance teaching, to enhance diversity and inclusivity of faculty, staff and students, to build long-term research collaborations, and to bring diverse ideas and challenges together for innovative science and problem-solving. This would build on and enhance existing strengths (and core values and commitments) in both colleges, while also leveraging other strengths and assets of the University.

The task force identified a number of alternative approaches for consideration that address the goals implicit in the charge. These were not universally supported in every case.

## **1. Development and support for research cooperatives**

Leadership, within colleges supported by central administration, can address the structural barriers by encouraging collaboration across colleges using research cooperatives. These cooperatives would capitalize upon the University of Minnesota's unique research strengths and advances, focused on the University's mission in the life sciences that spans well beyond the expertise presently resident just in CFANS and CBS. This approach can be successful if it is given priority over status quo operations and new investments are centered on these collaborative efforts. We stress that these resources should be in the form of targeted seed grants to develop large-scale research teams that would be successful in obtaining external research grants around 21<sup>st</sup> Century themes. (An example may be the Beckman Institute at the University of Illinois.)

Research cooperatives supported by multiple colleges can focus faculty and institutional support on key initiatives, while remaining flexible enough to respond to external drivers. These cooperatives could be in the form of multi-year commitments of faculty lines and resources to address a particular issue in a cooperative manner across colleges. Over time internal resources must match external resources allowing the cooperatives to grow with committed resources, but not be locked in as they would in the case of a center or single allocation to a college. Cooperatives would be formed around critical, "important scientific and societal problems," those that are complex and require solutions that will only come from the interaction of scientists from multiple disciplines and practitioners from diverse sectors.

The formation of a research cooperative would require further planning, but a few key attributes include: a common goal/question, resource incentives from central (cluster hire faculty lines, major investment in building or equipment), resource contribution from the cooperating colleges (faculty release to the cooperative for a percent time, space, administrative support, etc.), and clear agreed upon requirements (applied to basic interdisciplinary research, stakeholder partnerships, etc.). These cooperatives also need a clear sunset for this independence.

## **2. Undergraduate cross-collegiate initiatives**

The current budget model creates barriers to shared cross-collegiate teaching initiatives. The system needs to be immediately modified to share faculty expertise in teaching the largest number of students regardless of the admitting college. A second issue is the need to raise the enrollment cap for agriculture and life sciences and create cross-cutting courses that teach both basic and applied aspects of the agriculture and life sciences. To facilitate these goals will require cluster hiring between the two colleges.

### **3. Graduate student funding (fellowships)**

The task recommends increased funding for graduate students in the form of Research and Teaching Assistantships, which will result in stronger collaborators between faculty. Priority for funding would go to faculty from both colleges that co-advise students (for example, faculty members in Agronomy and Plant Genetics (CFANS) and BMBB (CBS) co-advising a student).

### **4. Structural needs**

We recommend a significant investment in infrastructure on the St. Paul Campus in research, teaching and public engagement space. Expansion of CBS and CFANS will require additional teaching space, particularly in active learning classrooms and laboratories. This infrastructure should also include revitalization of the student center, and new residential housing for students. We also recommend relocating the Bell Museum to St. Paul campus and rebuilding the outdated CBS greenhouse facility. To facilitate interactions between faculty in both colleges, the new research facilities should be shared by faculty in both colleges.

### **5. Enhance impact of extension**

One of the strengths of the University of Minnesota and its mission as a land grant research institution is the collaborative work of extension researchers and educators who work with communities and industries around the state. They have especially strong ties to agriculture. We need to continue to capitalize on their expertise and relationships. We should continue to strengthen links between the basic research of CBS and the applied research and outreach of Extension to help address crucial needs and challenges of our State. One recommended strategy would be to hire extension faculty (or P&A staff) specifically to act as “bridges” between CBS and CFANS. They could also work to bridge the knowledge of other colleges working in related areas of biotechnology, health, and the environment.

### **6. Life Sciences Leadership Council**

We recommend the establishment of a Life Sciences Leadership Council that allows for the development and execution of cross-collegiate research, teaching and extension initiatives. The Council will provide the platform for the Life Sciences to speak in a single voice with stakeholders.

### **7. Stronger collaboration and better shared use of state-wide facilities**

The University has tremendous strength in life and agricultural science research and teaching facilities at the Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve, Itasca Biological

Station, and Cloquet Forestry Center and at numerous Research and Outreach Centers. The task force recommends better coordination of research and teaching at these facilities that spans colleges.

## Reports from Task Force Subcommittees



Memo

Fr: Research Sub-group

To: CFANS/CBS Advisory Task Force (Kristen Nelson (Professor, CFANS),  
Mindy Kurzer (Professor, CFANS), Dan Voytas (Professor, Med School),  
Ambuj Upadhyay (graduate student, CBS)

Re: Merger of CFANS and CBS not recommended.

This memo is submitted in response to Provost Hanson's request for "*careful consideration of whether consolidating existing strengths will advance the excellence of our research and teaching; benefit students; enhance our partnerships with agriculture and other key stakeholders; and strengthen opportunities to help address critical challenges in agriculture, biology, environmental and natural resource sciences, and medicine.*"

After consideration of the feedback received from online submission, listening sessions, survey results, and meeting with a number of different stakeholders, the research subgroup of the Advisory Task Force recommends against the merger of CFANS and CBS. However, we believe there is considerable opportunity to unite resources of both colleges to build long-term research collaborations and bring diverse ideas and challenges together for innovative science and problem-solving. We provide some suggestions as to how this could be achieved.

### ***Rationale for our recommendation***

Across the University of Minnesota a few structural barriers have slowed innovation and student education limiting the ability to address critical challenges in the life sciences in the next 30 years. A CFANS/CBS merger is not the most effective or efficient structural response to these barriers because 1) few gains were identified for research over current conditions, 2) external pressures would not be more effectively addressed over current conditions, 3) each college's mission is sufficiently distinct that there is minimal overlap, and 4) dramatic cultural differences between the two colleges creates strength in diversity now, but could be a major barrier in a merged unit. Leadership, within colleges supported by central administration, can address the few structural barriers by encouraging collaboration across colleges through *research cooperatives* and *cross-college instructional initiatives*. This will be successful if it is given priority over status quo operations and new investment is centered on these collaborative efforts.

In addition, the focus of the merger concept has been on strengthening basic biological sciences; although this is the main focus of CBS, it is not the main focus of CFANS, where physical and social sciences are equally or more important. Rather than creating a stronger unit, merging the colleges could be divisive. Instead, building upon the existing strong collaborations, and reducing the barriers to collaborate among colleges will strengthen both colleges, and both basic and applied sciences.

### *Claims*

- A. Across the University of Minnesota a few structural barriers have slowed innovation and student education limiting the ability to address critical challenges in the next 30 years.
- Individual faculty interests and department tenure criteria have narrowed options for taking on joint-efforts focused on new, riskier research initiatives.
  - The two colleges have at times been in a competitive situation regarding funding.
  - Colleges have focused on efforts to protect their resource pools by limiting instructional collaboration across colleges and student selection of courses outside of their college.
- B. A CFANS/CBS merger is not the most effective or efficient structural response to these barriers:
- 1) Few gains were identified for research over current conditions,
    - Most faculty currently conduct research with scholars across the University and the globe. Those who seek out collaboration have had minimal problems in recent years. A few CBS faculty mentioned never speaking with faculty from CFANS or other colleges but this can be addressed with educational and cultural programs rather than structural.
    - Graduate students in interdisciplinary programs have access to faculty and research in multiple colleges.
    - As graduate student funding becomes scarcer within the sciences, adjustments will need to be made at all levels, but a college merger has little benefit in addressing the external drivers and leadership is able to address internal drivers.
  - 2) External pressures would not be more effectively addressed over current conditions,
    - Agility and creativity needed to address external pressures will not be better addressed by a merged college, even within research areas addressed by the Deans of CFANS and CBS and former Dean of CFANS.
    - Though the University has a role in basic research, our society demands that research be directed to solve global and regional challenges. University scientists will provide basic research and applied research but only as part of a broader societal team.
    - In environmental initiatives we have robust interdisciplinary and cross-college, cross-institutional research funded by the leading institutions of our nation (NSF, USFS, NOAA, USDA, NIH, etc.). Structural change would not substantially enhance these efforts.
  - 3) Each college's mission is sufficiently distinct that there is minimal overlap,
    - CBS's focused biological mission is on basic science with historical collaboration with the Medical School. CFANS problem-based, interdisciplinary mission spans basic to applied sciences with strong

collaboration with public agencies, industry and non-government organizations.

- CFANS is not a biological science college, but rather a college of physical, social, engineering, and biological scientists. CBS has a clear identity within the basic biological and medical sciences.

4) Dramatic cultural differences between the two colleges creates strength in diversity now, but would be a major barrier in a merged unit.

- A unique strength the University of Minnesota has over many of its peers is that it is a combined educational institution spanning basic to applied sciences. From the beginning, its focus has been the land-grant mission combined with theoretical advances across the disciplines and the core professional schools of our state. The irony of the contemporary educational discourse is that many other institutions are trying to achieve what we have by original design. Historically theoretical universities are struggling to grow their community-based research and experiential learning opportunities and many land-grant universities are investing in a few areas of research excellence.
- The diversity of thought represented by distinct colleges within the University of Minnesota is a strength that can be better utilized through joint collaborations and strong leadership.

***Alternative approach to enhancing life sciences research at the U of M:***

Leadership, within colleges supported by central administration, can address the few structural barriers by encouraging collaboration across colleges using research cooperatives and cross college instructional initiatives. This can be successful if it is given priority over status quo operations and new investment is centered on these collaborative efforts. As an alternative to merging colleges, we propose the formation of interdisciplinary research cooperatives that would each tackle a problem of societal significance that capitalizes upon the UMN's unique research strengths and advances the University's mission in the life sciences.

- Research cooperatives supported by multiple colleges can focus faculty and institutional support on key initiatives, while remaining flexible enough to respond to external drivers. These cooperatives could be 10-year commitments of faculty lines and resources to a joint effort on a particular issue. Over time Internal resources must match external resources allowing the cooperatives to grow with committed resources, but not be locked in as they would in the case of a Center or single allocation to a college.
- Cooperatives would be formed around critical, "wicked" problems, those that are so complex that solutions will only come from the interaction of scientists from multiple disciplines.
- For example, climate change science is a very interdisciplinary, and, if focused on a question, could create an innovative core that transforms what we can discover, invent, and advise regarding social systems and the environment. A climate change

cooperative would require a diverse range of social scientists focused on human behavior and governance expertise along with biological expertise – from molecules to ecosystems. This initiative could be further strengthened with cooperative buy-in by other Colleges and/or Institutes on campus.

- Another example is obesity, a critical health issue that has been tackled by numerous disciplines but only recently has it been understood that solutions will require innovative thinking, approaches from multiple perspectives, and the involvement of researchers in public health, nutrition, public policy, medicine, city planning, economics, behavioral sciences, to name a few. A concerted effort to bring together both basic and applied scientists, within the life and social sciences, will enhance the work of all involved. Given the tremendous strength the U of M has in the area of obesity research, this is a logical “signature area” that could be the focus of one research collaborative.

- To form a research cooperative we would need further planning, but a few key attributes include: a common goal/question, resource incentives from central (cluster hire faculty lines, major investment in building or equipment), resource contributions from the cooperating colleges (faculty release to the cooperative for a % time, space, administrative support, etc.), clear agreed upon qualities (applied to basic, interdisciplinary, stakeholder partnerships, etc.), sunset for independence (5-10 year window of central support with evidence of financial independence and/or completion of institutional restructuring and/or research outcomes).

## WORKING GROUP REPORT

### (STAFF)

Michael Sadowsky, Gary Muehlbauer, and Kate Tyler

January 14, 2014

We held two listening sessions for Staff, one on St. Paul Campus (on December 16, 2013) and one on the Minneapolis Campus (on December 9, 2013). Attendance at both meetings was fairly good, although the turn out in St. Paul was greater. The Staff present were asked 6 questions, namely: 1. What do you think would be improved by a formation of a new college composed of personnel from CFANS and CBS? 2. What do you imagine would be made more difficult? 3. What is your biggest fear about a combined college? 4. In terms of managing graduate programs and meeting the administrative needs of graduate students, what do you think would be improved by merging CFANS/CBS? 5. What do you imagine would be made more difficult?, and 6. From a 10,000 foot level, what suggestions might you have to make a new college successful?

In our opinion three major issues that were raised by staff involved questions of the unknown: 1) what will be the nature of this new college?, 2) how will this affect my job (will I lose my job?), and 3) how will this impact students and faculty? Since questions about merging both colleges involved structure, this was also of concern.

We asked staff to focus on issues related to both the pros (advantages) or cons (disadvantages) of creation of a new college. While we asked staff to look at the 10,000 foot level, questions and statements often were directed at lower levels (which was to be expected in many ways), at which we reminded them that we did not have most answers.

**Advantages** of the creation of a new college were expressed and focused on issues of the Educational/Student Experience and questions related to resource/structure. For the former, key benefits included: 1) more efficient research and teaching collaboration for faculty and students, 2) ease of attracting prospective students, 3) the ability to evolve new majors, 4) easier for students to move between units of the same college, 5) the ability of students to more easily switch tracks or reconsider their specialization, 6) students equipped in the newest most integrated science, and 7) attract a wider pool of prospective employers/recruiter for our students. Other possible benefits might include: 8) greater access for students to a broader range of faculty, and 9) the potential for growth in student numbers.

For issues related to Resources and Structure, Staff felt that 1) both colleges need to move forward and accelerate progress, together or separately, 2) that merging may bring a significant

investment to the St. Paul campus, 3) merging may give the unit more influence in the U as a larger college and this may translate into increased resources, 4) this may allow for the possible integration of outstate facilities (Itasca, Cloquet, etc), 5) a new college would result in a reduction of redundancies between colleges and increase in efficiencies, and 6) better alignment of some disciplines and resources. Together, they felt that a merged larger unit may lead to enhanced opportunities for resources and this may help with collaboration with other units.

The Staff are very loyal to the University and opined that if a new college makes the U more competitive on a national or international level then they will support it.

Despite these apparent advantages, however, the Staff also felt there were several **negative aspects of combining colleges**. These also involved the Educational/Student Experience, where the staff noted 1) The cultures of the two colleges are very different and combining them may be difficult, 2) They do not want to lose the things that make each college strong, 3) Each college has different service and advising models that work for different groups of students, 4) They wanted to maintain the sense of identity for students and prospective students and this might be lost as would the smallness of colleges on the St. Paul campus, 5) We would potentially lose more agriculture students to NDSU and SDSU, 6) If there was enough consideration of the undergraduate experience, 7) The merger would reduce the apparent excellent student-teacher ratio in CFANS, 8) There is a need to ensure that students are able to transfer in and bring credit, and 9) What would happen to signature programs like the Nature of Life in CBS, or experiential learning in CFANS? Along these lines, staff were worried about reconciling academic standing differences between CBS/CFANS and realized that the new college would lead to a loss of identity and that the colleges have very different cultures which will have an impact on students and student services.

In terms of Resources and Structure, Staff were concerned with creating a two-tier system by merging colleges without merging the undergraduate experience, and that students might be confused if more people have offices on both campuses and there would be more travel between campuses. The staff felt that this change may be too fast and that the timing may be wrong given new finance/payroll system, new web/email system, new leadership. Adding this change on top may be too much for staff and lead to significant retention issues. They also felt that this kind of change is expensive financially and hugely disruptive to students, faculty, and staff. Moreover, they said that this merger would be costly in ways that don't show up on paper – creating significant morale cost to staff. There was also significant discussion about negative impacts to external stakeholders. Specifically mentioned were that outside stakeholders don't understand the need for change and that people outstate are wary of big changes at the U. They were also concerned on the financial impact of the merger that would

lead to unhappy donors, alums (similar to what happened with CNR donors and alum in the CFANS merger, concerns were also raised by staff concerning CBS donors). Lastly,. Staff were concerned that the merger would results in a loss of our ability to maintain our position as a land grant university.

The Staff also asked several questions concerning the merger. These included: 1) Why is the merger the only tool being suggested to further the growth of the two colleges? 2) Aren't there other ways to work together to improve St. Paul campus? 3) Why not slow down until new VP/dean of med school is on board? 4) How quickly, how dramatic, and how far will this go? 5) Will staff input be welcomed? 6) Will specific programs be realigned? 7) Is this a done deal and will all be transparent, 8) Will both colleges be fully amalgamated and how will that happen? , and 9) How will this affect future enrollment?

Overall, the staff thought that this could be great or a disaster.

### **Working Group Recommendations**

The staff surfaced many issues and concerns that were voiced by the other listening groups. The demands on the staff during the development of a new college would be large. The staff cited an increased workload, and uncertainty about their jobs that would contribute to lower morale and productivity. For example, the CFANS staff played a large role in COAFES – CNR merger and they are finally feeling comfortable with their new roles. Thus, there is not much energy for developing a new college. However, the staff highlighted several areas that could be improved including: developing stronger collaboration between the two colleges in teaching and research that leverages the strengths of each college, attracting stronger students, reduced redundancies and more efficient use of resources, integrating outstate facilities, and reinvigorating the St. Paul campus. Much of this could be accomplished without the formation of a new college. If a new college was to be formed, however, the staff need to see the transparency of all processes and be involved early on for input and advice on how to achieve the needed changes and goals.

January 13, 2014

## New College Task Force - Extension Workgroup Summary Report

David Bernlohr, Greg Cuomo, Phil Pardey

***Provide questions you asked during your listening session.***

Attachment #1 Agenda includes questions asked.

***Provide approximate numbers in attendance.***

Seven in St. Paul, one in St. Cloud, all from CFANS. There was some confusion in getting information to potential Extension participants outstate.

***Barb will provide you with a summary of her take on the pros, cons, concerns and opportunities afforded by the proposed new college during listening sessions.***

Attachment #2

***Kate will provide you with a summary of survey responses of primary relevance to your group. Please read through these yourselves.***

"Extension" as a keyword was used to identify responses that included comments regarding Extension.

***From the information that Barb and Kate provided you, and from your own observations at the listening session, we would like you to summarize what your subgroup perceives as the benefits and potential opportunities of a combined new college, as well as important concerns or potential disadvantages to be weighed.***

General:

- The discussions were largely about what Biological Sciences could bring to Extension. From our perspective, it appears unclear to CBS what value Extension brings to CBS other than an additional education opportunity that may be of help with grants that require an external outreach or broader impacts section. Given the lack of attendance, we are not sure that CBS faculty see connecting to Extension as a value.

Opportunities:

- Viewed from a high level, more closely aligning (or even integrating) the scientific endeavors of CBS and CFANS, by way of a merger or other means, have potential benefits. However,



the details are where the substantive issues exist, and largely determine whether or not this potential might be realized.

- People were encouraged (if sometime cautiously) by the opportunities to link the basic knowledge of CBS to the state of Minnesota through Extension.
- The federal granting culture is currently looking to include translational and outreach components into some of their RFP's. More closely linking the generally more basic science in CBS with Extension may improve granting success.
- Arguably, the opportunities described above already exist. There is a substantial amount of basic science already conducted within CFANS, yet even with the changes in Federal granting approaches there is still a lack of collaboration with Extension in preparing responses to these RFPs. This suggests that a merger per se will not address the existing impediments to developing more integrated grant proposals.

#### Concerns:

- Survey respondents felt it important to maintain a strong Extension system in a new college and were concerned that it might be difficult to do so.
- As presently conceived, Extension efforts are centered on creating behavior change, largely through non-credit education. How will this be understood/embraced in a grant funded, for-credit environment? It is also not clear if Extension is ready and/or capable of changing to meet the challenges that would occur with a proposed merger. For example, shifting their focus to more of a "systems approach" instead of the present "programmatic" mode of service delivery, and shifting away from primary production to more fully engage with other elements of the agricultural and food value chain of relevance to Minnesota.
- Extension is driven by a Mission oriented timeframe, often resulting in a career-long focused effort (e.g., working to reduce field discharge of N into surface waters). This is in contrast to the typically much shorter timeframes of much CBS research, which is geared to 3-5 year granting cycles. Grant support for Mission focused work tends to ebb and flow, whereas the nature of that work for the betterment of Minnesota is more consistent.
- Some practical illustrative examples of the difficulties and prospects resulting from mergers include:
  - <sup>36</sup><sub>17</sub> Applied Statistics was merged with Statistics. Finding a faculty in Statistics today interested in engaging in CFANS mission research has become a challenge.
  - <sup>36</sup><sub>17</sub> Rhetoric was moved from CFANS. Again, finding faculty from Rhetoric interested in engaging in CFANS mission oriented research and teaching has also become a challenge.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> It is perceived that if Applied Economics were to merge with Economics or if Bioproducts and Biosystems Engineering were to merge with CSE, with time and new faculty hires it would be difficult to envision a future where an applied food, agricultural and natural resource focus would be highly valued in those merged departments. These prospects are of real concern to the Extension mission of the University in a merged College.

- Much of Extension's funding has a local and regional (within state) component, with strong agricultural interests. The prospects of sustaining that funding support over time are put into question with a merger that does not clearly enhance that local or regionally oriented food, agricultural and natural resource outreach effort.

Concerns beyond Extension:

- Concerns were expressed about the potential diseconomies of scale of a merged College and the willingness of faculty within an enlarged college to engage.
- Concerns were expressed around potential changes in admission standards and what it would mean to undergraduate admissions of those interested in traditional 'land grant' majors.
- A substantial share of faculty associated with CBS have their academic home in health science. The funding, collaboration and mission orientation of a merged college, and, in particular, the practicalities (distinct from rhetoric) of engaging scientific research with extension activities pose substantial organizational questions and institutional hurdles already, which may simply be exacerbated by a merger.

***Please frame your summaries within the task force charge from the provost: "careful consideration of whether consolidating existing strengths will advance the excellence of our research and teaching; benefit students; enhance our partnerships with agriculture and other key stakeholders; and strengthen opportunities to help address critical challenges in agriculture, biology, environmental and natural resource sciences, and medicine."***

Key Points:

- Whether a new college will enhance or detract from the University's Extension efforts in food, agriculture and natural resources will be largely driven by time constraints and reward structures. The challenge with linking basic research to Extension already exists within CFANS, and is exacerbated by the University's existing reward structures and Promotion and Tenure system. For the individual faculty member University rewards are metric based. Productivity assessments are heavily weighted towards professional publications, citations, grant funding, and graduate student supervision. The ability to excel in these metrics is generally diminished by engaging in Extension. An effort to engage and develop effective

Extension programs is time consuming and often makes those committed to Extension appear less productive in terms of the conventional metrics. Those in CFANS who truly put an effort into Extension tend to have lower salaries than their contemporaries who do not have Extension appointments. In CBS there is a very strong culture of grant making (as there is with the research oriented faculty in CFANS). Extension effort would likely be further diminished in a combined College that shifts the balance of its research towards the more basic sciences unless the University reward system is implemented differently. The real issue at root here is in the history of a departmental approach to Promotion and Tenure and salary raises. Extension and applied research efforts reduce the 'Impact Factor' of publications for individuals and departments because there are fewer people working in these fields to cite work. For example, an 'obesity' publication has many multitudes more potential to be cited than a paper in reducing odor in swine systems.

- There are cultural issues in Extension's approach to its work. There are cultural issues in faculty approaches to research in the basic sciences, both in CFANS and CBS. Unless philosophical and practical approaches to rewarding faculty are changed, a new college per se is unlikely to improve Extension efforts at the U of MN.
- CBS has a set of goals over the coming decade that includes expanding the number of freshman admits, number of faculty, and number of majors. It is unclear how a stronger connection to Extension helps CBS realize those goals.
- An additional concern is that in a merged or restructured environment, how and if Extension would evolve if their funding were to be directed to meet new goals for the upcoming decade.

Recommendations regardless of New College discussion outcome:

- A CFANS-CBS merger has the prospects of creating a stronger Extension/engagement link between food, agriculture and health. However, many of the opportunities for bridging the food, agricultural and health missions of the university require active engagement with AHS and the SPH, and these aspects have not been part of the considerations to date in this prospective CFANS-CBS merger review.
- Positioning CBS as the "intermediary" research and extension link between AHS and CFANS (at least with respect to the life sciences aspects of the University's research portfolio), and putting in place the institutional details to lower the transactions costs among these three units (which presently are absent or inadequate), could well have a higher payoff to the University overall than a CBS-CFANS merger.

- There exists real potential for creative and productive engagement between Extension, CFANS generally, CBS, and other university entities via MN Drive. Efforts to enhance the new funding, research and outreach opportunities afforded by MN Drive may well have a higher payoff to the university overall than diverting scarce administrative, faculty and staff efforts to a CFANS-CBS merger.
- How do we connect the information age and supercomputing to Extension? Linking basic genetics/genomics to farm operations and agricultural cum natural landscapes through computational biology offers much scientific and economic promise. This is currently possible in CFANS and is not currently limited by Collegiate structure. This area of endeavor relies on merging very different world views of faculty (both within and outside CFANS and CBS). It also requires different modes of engagement around the university and outside the university that are not envisaged or addressed through a prospective CFANS-CBS merger.
- The recommendations above provide opportunities to better engage Extension across the University. To make this a reality, more collegiate partners must be included. To achieve this University wide benefit from Extension, recognition of the value of Extension and additional support and investment will be needed as well as re-visioning and repositioning existing Extension activities to adopt a more systems (not programmatic) approach spanning food, agriculture and natural resources and encompassing the production and consumption (including health and economic well-being) aspects as well.

# AGEND A

## **CFANS/CBS Merger Task Force**

### **Extension Listening Session**

December 16, 2013

3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

St. Paul, MN

December 17, 2013

9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

St. Cloud, MN

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3:00 p.m.

Introduction – Greg Cuomo

CBS Profile – David Bernlohr

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CFANS Extension Profile – Mike Schmitt

3:15 p.m.

Discussion:

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“Opportunities for Extension with a CFANS/CBS structural  
realignment”

3:45 p.m.

Discussion:

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“Identify challenges and perspective solutions related to a  
CFANS/CBS structural realignment”

4:15 p.m.

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What are the key points we would like to take away from this  
discussion?

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4:30 p.m.

Adjourn

## **CFANS – CBS Listening Session**

Audience: **Extension**

Location: **St. Paul Campus**

Date: **December 16, 2013**

### **Opportunities**

#### <sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Educational Experience

- More opportunities for CBS students who come in believing they want to be pre-med but change their minds

#### <sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Resource/Structure/Collaboration

- Ideally, bringing basic science and applied science closer together can only strengthen the whole unit
- Great opportunity to bolster resources
- Extension state specialists might be a great audience for technological expertise from CBS
- A lot of environmental/ecology issues could certainly benefit from the crossover between the two
- Capitalize on what are already natural connections: Biotech Institute, Cedar Creek
- The faculty is way ahead on this. There is a lot of crossover already. How do we reduce barriers to this kind of collaboration? What is the best structure to facilitate potential collaborative initiatives?
- Extension faculty can be conduits for broader impacts that CBS faculty has to demonstrate as part of their research—now being asked for in NIH and NSF grants.

### **Concerns**

#### <sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Extension/Faculty Impact

- Extension is based on changing behavior through non-credit education. How will it be understood in a grant-funded, for-credit environment?
- Extension has a much longer time frame, about behavioral change. The merger brings into play people's idea of what a successful career or program is.
- Larger college gives faculty permission to check out more, feel less collegiality and obligation to participate. Silos re-emerge, people feel like the larger college is too big to engage with.
- Thoughts and ideas of younger faculty are important. They are the ones who will be living with this for a long time.

### <sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> External Stakeholder Impact

- How does the merger affect how the U is seen by the outside: funders, legislature, etc.? Important to pay attention to development concerns, loyal donors may be pretty far behind.

### <sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Structure

- Lots of concerns about implementation process and structure; details could make or break success.
- How would departments work as functional units? Would they stay the same, would they be re-formed?
- Reward system of the U (based on grants, publications) makes it hard for CBS faculty to engage with faculty in applied science.

## **Questions**

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Do the colleges complement each other? How do we end up with a better product delivery system than we have now? We want to be sure we can deliver more to our students from a combined college.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Does it require a merger? Structural reorganization? Do we just need the two colleges to work and plan together?

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Are we leaving some significant units out of the discussion, e.g. public health?

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> What does the Venn diagram of the two colleges look like? How much educational overlap is there? There has to be enough commonality to make it logically functional.

## **Key Retention**

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Keep stakeholders and partners engaged

## **CFANS – CBS Listening Session**

Audience: **Extension**

Location: **St. Cloud Extension Office**

Date: **December 17, 2013**

### **Opportunities**

#### <sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Educational Experience/Impact on Students & Minnesota

- Would this help educate consumers on the value of food and food systems?
- In 50 years there will be 9 billion people to feed with fewer farms and less land to do it. If this is the best way to get there, let's go.
- May bring a more holistic view of the entire food system

#### <sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Resource/Structure/Collaboration

- Conceptually, universities have to figure out how to merge administrative expense so more monies go to the kids
- Obtaining large collaborative grants may be possible; more grant opportunities with CBS' research capacities

### **Concerns**

#### <sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Educational Experience

- Entrance requirements are very different and attract a different type of student; leads to very different focus
- Would ag students still come to the U or be overwhelmed with the basic science requirements
- Would land grant majors continue to exist?
- With U's drive to raise ACT scores, ag ed is in trouble
- Access: good farm kids can't get in; perpetuates rural community myth of the U being elitist

#### <sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Extension/Faculty Impact

- Extension needs to change as well; progressives may like a new structure; traditional base may not
- People are nervous about this; it's another big change

#### <sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> External Stakeholder Impact

- Legislature may not understand or support change

#### <sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Structure

- You need a really good dean to understand the different missions of the colleges
- Structural issues are a concern—devil is always in those details
- Tenure track faculty concerns; not really a merger issue



## **Questions**

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> What other solutions are available? What other models exist?

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> How much money will this save? If none, not sure why this would happen.

## Undergraduate Education Working Group

The Undergraduate Education Working Group consisted of two professors/department heads from CFANS and two undergraduate students, one each from CFANS and CBS. Our charge was to listen and summarize comments on a potential college merger/restructuring from undergraduate students in both colleges.

### Members:

- Rob Kulhanek (CBS Undergraduate)
- Rylee Ahnen (CFANS Undergraduate)
- Dr. Emily Hoover (Professor and Head, Horticultural Science CFANS)
- Dr. Michael White (Professor and Head, Animal Science CFANS).

Provide questions the facilitator asked during your listening session

-How would a new college involving CFANS and CBS enhance or detract from your college experience and learning?

-How would you hope a new college involving CFANS and CBS would improve/enhance your college experience?

-How would you be concerned a new college involving CFANS and CBS would diminish or not improve/enhance your college experience?

Provide approximate numbers in attendance at listening sessions.

There were two separate facilitated Listening Sessions held on December 3rd, 2013 for undergraduate students. The first was held on Minneapolis campus in 3-180 Kenneth H. Keller Hall from 3-4pm and had about 30 students in attendance. The second was on St. Paul campus in 125 ABLMS from 5-6pm with about 25 students in attendance. All subcommittee members attended both listening sessions.

Working Group Summary: Perceptions of the benefits and potential opportunities of a combined new college, as well as important concerns or potential disadvantages to be weighed.

After reading over 400 pages of online survey responses and listening to undergraduate students, the committee can summarize several potential benefits and opportunities from undergraduate students:

- CFANS students would be allowed to take some CBS courses they currently are blocked from
- CBS students could use CFANS career center
- Students recognize that there could be increased collaboration for research, teaching, and coursework across current colleges.

The comments and concerns of undergraduate students can be summarized as follows from listening sessions and in surveys multiple times (in no particular order):

- Loss of collegiate feel - both sides stated that they like their “small college feel”
- Loss or dilution of prestige or brand of CBS
- Loss of access to potential CFANS students - freshman student profiles differ between CFANS and CBS. If entrance requirements change, potentially fewer students will be admitted to current CFANS undergraduate programs
- Loss of “land-grant university” status that CFANS represents
- Potential loss of scholarships in CFANS to current CBS students
- Loss of visibility of majors in CFANS
- Loss of viability and vitality of the St Paul campus with the perception that courses and faculty would be moving to Minneapolis campus
- Different student bodies have very different academic and professional goals

Given all the data collected through various means, our subcommittee has concluded that at best undergraduate education could be unchanged for both current student bodies of CFANS and CBS. If a merger were to occur, students should feel as well if not better served by services, majors and courses. Currently the vast majority of CBS students come to the UM with the goal of entering into graduate school or professional programs while CFANS students primarily go directly into the workforce. Unless the newly formed college figures out how to deal with these distinct career aspirations, the students will be underserved. This also brings up the issue of having a “lower tier” and “upper tier” structure - if admission requirements remain the same, students going into the “CBS” tier would have stricter requirements and may be considered “upper” or more prestigious than the “CFANS” or “lower” tier with more relaxed entrance requirements. This would create a potentially dangerous dichotomy within the new structure.

Because of the differences in student body due to differing high school preparation and career aspirations students that currently have access to the UM might be denied entrance. CFANS students expressed concern that their interests would be unmet if a merger were to occur. Conversely, CBS students repeatedly expressed that if a merger were to occur the prestige of CBS would be reduced or diluted. The “brand” of both colleges - which both have worked hard to craft, especially CFANS (due to its recent formation) - was also a concern for students, who feel strongly connected to the distinct community already present in both colleges. Combining the two colleges threatens the unique aspects and “small-college atmospheres” of both schools, a threat that was of great importance to students in both bodies.

Considering all that the Task Force has heard and read, the risk/benefit analysis of our subcommittee leads us to reject the formation of a new college. While portions of the responses from undergraduate students can be attributed to a fear of the unknown (a factor that has been noted across nearly all constituent groups), there have been many concerns, questions and insights brought to our attention by undergraduate students that reinforces the conclusion to keep the colleges separate. A more fruitful approach may be to investigate areas identified with this exercise and devise methodologies to create solutions for these under the current structure.

# **WORKING GROUP REPORT**

## **(GRADUATE STUDENTS AND GRADUATE EDUCATION)**

John Berini, Salli Dymond, Scott Lanyon and Carl Stenoien

January 9, 2014

We held two listening sessions but only one graduate student attended. Our sense is that graduate students recognize that this is an important discussion for faculty and staff, but that they are uncertain how merger or non-merger would affect them. The question about whether or not to merge CBS and CFANS is fundamentally about administrative structure. For the most part, CBS and CFANS graduate students have little knowledge of administrative structure and the current responsibilities/roles of graduate programs, departments and colleges. Therefore, answering questions about new opportunities that might derive from a collegiate merger was very difficult for many graduate student respondents. Many students had strong opinions about current strengths that shouldn't be weakened and current weaknesses that should be addressed, but were unclear whether merger would make matters better or worse. Despite these difficulties, several summary statements can be made from the survey responses and individual conversations that working group members had with graduate students:

- More collaboration across the full spectrum of the life sciences (in research, in equipment-sharing, in advising, and in teaching) would be great. Many felt that there was significant collaboration already, others felt that there was little, but all could agree that more is always better. There was not a consensus that merger was necessary, or even advisable, to accomplish this goal.
- Increased understanding and appreciation by students and faculty of the full spectrum of the life sciences would be beneficial even for people who don't collaborate broadly.
- We need more professional development opportunities for graduate students (career development, communications, outreach...).
- Having a broader range of classes, less redundancy of classes, in both undergraduate and graduate education would be a welcome change.
- Merger might allow us to reduce the number of administrative/office staff
- We need increased visibility/clout for the non-medical life sciences at the University of Minnesota.
- We need increased TA & RA opportunities for graduate students.
- A small unit feel is important to graduate students.

- We should take this opportunity to revise the undergraduate and graduate curricula/programs to meet today's needs.
- Don't lower admission standards for CBS undergraduate majors but don't increase admission standards for CFANS undergraduate majors.
- Strengthen CBS's outreach opportunities.
- Don't lose CBS' Nature of Life and Foundation of Biology undergraduate experiences
- Don't lose CFANS' land grant tradition and strong ties to the state and donors
- Currently, it seems there is more of a shortage of TAs and RAs for CFANS than CBS grad students. It may also be true that the stipends differ (lower for CFANS). How would a merger affect this current state of affairs? Formerly CFANS students pulled up, formerly CBS students pulled down, meet somewhere in the middle?
- Due to recent cluster hires, even without the merger, CBS departments and grad student will need to grow to accommodate these new faculty members. It is unclear how these departmental efforts would be affected under a merger.
- If cross-college collaboration is inherently interdisciplinary, merging the colleges may redefine some cross-college collaborations as no longer interdisciplinary. This could make certain grants more difficult to obtain.

Overall, most students were primarily concerned that their programs stay strong and that their funding opportunities don't diminish. The college or department that their program is in was of minor importance when choosing a graduate program. Therefore, maintaining the status quo was generally seen as preferable to change which most felt would most likely weaken their program. Although most responses were negative about the merger itself, the consensus was that it was important to explore ways to capitalize on the strengths of the two colleges.

## Recommendations

Assuming that the two colleges are not going to be merged, we would like to see steps taken to increase the opportunities for collaboration between researchers in both colleges. We feel that one way to do this is to provide tools for researchers to find potential collaborators. As it turns out, such a tool is already available but most CFANS and CBS researchers are unaware of its existence and utility.

- **Experts@Minnesota is a tool that can be used to find potential collaborators using keyword searches. We recommend that graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and faculty be made aware of this tool as part of their initial orientation.**

The other way to increase the opportunities for collaboration is by providing opportunities that bring together researchers who might not normally encounter each other. We have several recommendations along these lines:

- **There are so many seminar series across the two colleges that it is difficult for researchers to keep track of them all. We recommend that a single Google Calendar be established that lists all the seminars, the presenter, the seminar title, and location.**
- **The majority of seminar series are departmental, but the goal here is to increase opportunities for inter-departmental collaboration. We recommend that departmental seminar series be held in the fall semester only and that a similar number (or fewer) of themed seminars that are of interest to researchers across many departments be held in the spring semester. The goal of these themed seminars would be to bring together groups of researchers from many different units. Ideally, each of these seminar presentations would be followed by a reception at which researchers could interact.**
- **There are a variety of graduate methods/techniques courses that could be taught that would be of interest to many graduate students across the two colleges (Statistics, Bayesian inference, R programming, Proposal writing, Writing to non-scientists...). Promoting these courses across the two colleges would increase enrollment to make the courses cost-effective to offer, would provide graduate students with much needed skills, and would create yet more opportunities for graduate students from disparate programs to get to know one another.**

## **External Stakeholders Report (Jan. 15, 2014)**

Seth Naeve, Susan Weller

### ***Summarize your working group describing your stakeholder focus.***

Our stakeholder focus was the external stakeholders excluding donors and alumni. Approximately 20 external stakeholders attended. In addition, a department head (Dr. Ek), an alumni liaison (M. Buschette) and several taskforce members were present.

***Provide questions you asked during your listening session.*** A powerpoint presentation was provided to orient the audience as to the circumstances that led to the merger consideration. The last two slides posed the following questions:

#### ***Slide I. What is our value to you? What can we do better?***

- a) What 'value' do you receive from the University and Colleges now? (e.g., research & extension, products, services, continuing education, IP, engagement opportunities, etc.) What can we do better?***
- b) What are we doing well in undergraduate and graduate education that meets your needs? What can we do better?***

#### ***Slide II. What are your concerns?***

- c) How might a new college structure deliver additional or future value to you?***
- d) What are your concerns (perceived risks) of reorganizing the colleges into a new structure?***

### **Executive summary:**

External stakeholders were primarily from the agricultural and natural resources constituency; only one CBS stakeholder attended. Stakeholders expressed concern over the lack of vision and compelling arguments for a new college comprised of CBS and CFANS. They are cautiously willing to support a new college **if** a coherent argument is provided that convinces them that the new college will be exponentially more effective ( $1+1 >> 2$ ) than the current situation. They noted that CFANS was only seven years old as a merged college and had yet to fully demonstrate the promised benefits. A few asked why colleges were in silos (vertical, hierarchical structure) and why horizontal (among college) integration was not the first step. The need for a second merger was not adequately demonstrated from their perspective.

External stakeholders concerns echoed those of prior subgroups (see Hoese report). Should a college merger go forward, compelling arguments would be needed to gain their support. Building support and testing these arguments **in advance** of such a decision would be prudent. Importantly, stakeholders reiterated their general support for the University and their trust in its leadership.